

Chapter 3

Related Ethnic Communities

The last chapter was a brief review of the concept of race, caste, and differentiated ethnic/linguistic groups. The intermixing of incoming races with each other and their in-breeding with the pre-existing indigenous peoples gave rise to a number ethnic groups, all of which may not be of one single homogenous genetic composition. Some ethnic groups in the Indus Valley may have their ancestral nucleus in the Scythians, some in the Parthians, some in the Huns, some in Turkic tribes, and so on but most likely admixtures of all. These genetic compositions represent the admixing situations that go back centuries back. The respective admixture compositions, of course, did not stop the process of genetic admixing at any point in time, the process continued unabated and is still in operation. Since each ethnic groups was coexisting with some other ethnic groups, certain degree of gene flow was possible, in fact most likely. The process of endogamy was a social system that came into being much later. Even here, it was much weaker among the Muslim groups than that in the Hindu castes. In this situation, intermixing of different castes or ethnic groups was a distinct possibility. Who were these people with whom the Arains interacted socially or even genetically?

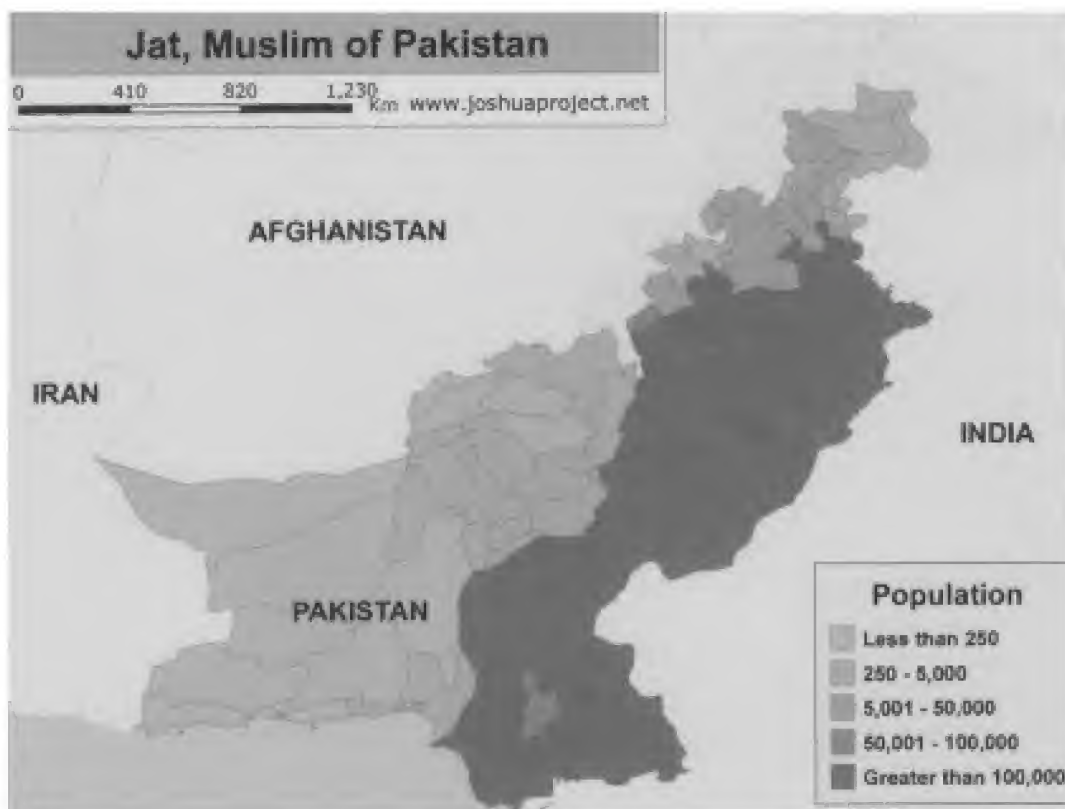
As the next chapter will show, the Arains may have originated as an off-shoot of another ethnic group or caste or, alternatively, they may have emerged as an occupational caste from intermixing of other castes of similar profession before the caste-dependent endogamy hardened and a distinct ethnic group took shape. In order to look into these possibilities or even likelihood, we need to know about other groups among whom the Arains lived and interacted with. In the followings, we offer a synopsis of a few important ethnic

groups who were close to the Arians, geographically and occupationally, and with whom the Arians confess to have some affiliation. They were the people of related ethnicities. We shall concentrate only on those castes who were traditionally agriculturist by profession and preferably Muslim.

Jats: Jat or Jatt is an important ethnic group of Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan. Here they are all Muslims. In India they are found in East Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan. Some of them are Hindus but most of them are Sikh. The Jats of South Asia currently have an approximate population of 31 million, some 5 million only in Pakistan. In the early 21st century the Jat constituted about 20 percent of the population of Punjab, nearly 10 percent of the population of Balochistan, Rajasthan, and Delhi, and from 2 to 5 percent of the populations of Sindh, Northwest Frontier, and Uttar Pradesh (India). The Jats of Pakistan are Muslim by faith; the nearly seven million Jat of Indian Punjab are divided into two large castes of about equal strength: one Sikh, concentrated in Punjab, the other Hindu, spread all over. According to earlier censuses, the Jat people accounted for approximately one-quarter of the entire Sindhi-Punjabi speaking area, making it the largest single socially distinctive group in the region (7). They are a traditionally agricultural community in Indian Punjab and Pakistan. Originally pastoralists in the lower Indus river-valley of Sindh, Jats migrated north into the Punjab region, Delhi, Rajputana, and the western Gangetic Plain in late medieval times (18,19). Jats began converting to Islam from the early Middle Ages onward, and now form the distinct community in Pakistan. They now form a most numerous as well as the most important section of the agricultural population of Punjab, next to the Arains.

The Jats have a deep history, apparently formed during the centuries following the heydays of the Scythian power in Sindh or at least by the collapse of the Kushan Empire, ca. 250 AD. Hiuen Tsang gave the following account of a numerous pastoral-nomadic population in seventh-

century Sin-ti (Sind): "By the side of the river [of Sind], along the flat marshy lowlands for some thousand li, there are several hundreds of thousands [a very great many] families, [which] give themselves exclusively to tending cattle and from this derive their livelihood. They have no masters, and whether men or women, are neither rich nor poor." While they were left unnamed by the Chinese pilgrim, these same people of lower Sind were called 'Zutts of the wastes' by the Arab geographers in the early eighth century AD. These 'camel drivers.' were one of the chief pastoral-nomadic people at that time, with numerous subdivisions (20).



Andre Wink (18) describes them thus: "In Sind, the breeding and grazing of sheep and buffaloes was the regular occupations of pastoral nomads in the lower country of the south, while the breeding of goats and camels was the dominant activity in the regions immediately to the east of the Kirthar range and between Multan and Mansura. The

Jats were one of the chief pastoral-nomadic divisions here in early-medieval times. They generally did not move over very long distances on a regular basis but some of the Jat tribes did migrate to the north, into Punjab, and here, between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, the once largely pastoral-nomadic Jat population was transformed into sedentary peasants. Some Jats continued to live in the thinly populated *baar* country between the five rivers of the Punjab, adopting a kind of transhumance, based on the herding of goats and camels. It seems that what happened to the Jats is paradigmatic of most other pastoral and pastoral-nomadic populations in India in the sense that they became ever more closed in by an expanding sedentary-agricultural realm." (18).

The Muslim chronicles point at the important concentrations of *al-Zutts* in towns and fortresses of Lower and Central Sindh (18). Many of these *Zutts* have been described as the followers of Islam and had their own independent chiefs while others were pastoral nomads, inhabiting the Indus delta region and the *infidels*. It is believed that the *Zutts* were the first converts to Islam, and many were employed as soldiers by the Arab administration in Sindh.

There is controversy about the the *Zutt* designation by the Arabs. While majority of historians tend to agree that the *Zutts* were in fact the *Jats*, the author of *Majmuat-Tawarikh* tends to believe that the Arabs collectively called the Sindhi people *al-Zutts* and *al-Mayds* (the Medes). Thus, it was a general term used for the inhabitants of Sindh, especially those who lived in the interior of the region (21). Richard Burton also seems to subscribe to this opinion, saying that in Sindhi dialect, the term is pronounced as 'Yat' and means 'a camel-driver or breeder of camels' (22). Among other scholars, Jabir Raja (23) also says that the animal herders and agriculturists of Sindh and Saurashtra were called the Jats. The Jats have also been referred to by the Ghaznavid chroniclers of the eleventh century (24,25) in the history of Sind (26,27); by the Delhi Sultanate's chroni-

cler (28) and by the 18th century mystic writer Shah Wali Allah in his political letters (29) but it is not clear if they meant by the 'Jats' a general population or a specific community as we understand it today.

Between the 10th and the 13th Century, there was large immigration of Jat groups from Bauchistan and Sindh northwards to Punjab and eastwards towards what is now Rajasthan and Saurashtra. Many Jat clans initially settled in the region known as the Baar country, which referred to the area between the rivers of Punjab, thinly populated with scanty rainfall which accommodated a type of pastoral nomadism and was based primarily on the rearing of goats and camels. At the same time, the Jats became a peasant population where irrigation was possible. J.S.Grewal concludes: "However, the most numerous of the agricultural tribes were the Jats. They had come from Sindh and Rajasthan along the river valleys, moving up, displacing the **Gujjars** and Rajputs to occupy cultivable lands. Before the any other agricultural tribe between the rivers Jhelum and Jamuna."(19).

In general, the Jats are assumed to be the product of admixture of Indo-Scythian elements (see Chapter 4) with local indigenous Indus groups of Sindh. Sir Alexander Cunningham, (a former Director-General of the Archeological Survey of India) wrote: "The *Xantha* (a Scythian tribe) are very probably the *Zutts* of the early Arab writers. As the *Zutts* were in Sindh to the west of the Indus, this location agrees very well with what we know of the settlement of the Sakas (the Scythians) on the Indian frontier" (30). He further stated "their name is found in Northern India from the beginning of the Christian era. These people were considered by early Arab writers to have descended from *Mids* and *Zutts*" (30). Cunningham, however, believes that the Jats share this Scythian ancestry with the Rajputs and other castes (31).

He identified the Jats with the *Zanthi* of Strabo (Greek Geographer of the ancient times) and the *Jata* of Pliny (Roman writer) and Ptolemy (Another Greek Geographer of the ancient times); and held that they probably entered the Punjab from their home on the Oxus (in Central Asia) very shortly after the Medes or Mands (still exist as one of the Jat clans of Baluchistan), who moved into Punjab about a century before Christ." (40).

Historian James Todd agrees with Cunningham in considering the Jat people to be of Indo-Scythian Stock (32). B.S. Dillon, a Jat scholar of repute, also concurs with this opinion and states that Jat people are Indo-Scythians from historical evidence (33) and recent genetic research studies have shown large amounts of Scythian and White Hun genes in Jats. (33). There are several other opinions in the same vein; for example, Sir John Marshall, (a former Director-General of the Archeological Survey of India) wrote: "These Scythian invaders came principally from the three great tribes of Massagetae (great Getae), Sacaraucae, and Dahae; the *Getae* probably got transformed into Get, Jet, Zatt, and then Jat (34). J.F. Hewitt wrote: "Further evidence both of the early history and origin of the race of Jats, or Getae, is given by the customs and geographical position of another tribe of the same stock, called the Massagetae, or great (massa) Getae (a Scythian tribe)" (35). Finally, S.M Latif wrote: "A considerable portion of the routed army of the Scythians settled in the Punjab, and a race of them, called Nomardy, inhabited the country on the west bank of the Indus (river). They are described as a nomadic tribe, living in wooden houses, after the old Scythian fashion, and settling where they found sufficient pasturage. A portion of these settlers, the descendants of *Massagetae*, were called *Getes*, from whom sprung the modern Jats. (36).

Arthur Edward Barstow wrote: "It is from these Scythian immigrants that most of the Jat tribes are at any rate partly descended." (37). A.H. Bingley repeated this in

verbatim (38). P.S. Gill wrote: "There is a general consensus of opinion that Jats, and with them Rajputs and Gujjars were foreigners who came from their original home, near the Oxus, Central Asia." (39). H.A Rose wrote: "Many of the Jat tribes of the Punjab have customs which apparently point to non-Aryan origin.

Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff wrote: "My conclusion, therefore, is, that the Jats may be of Scythian descent (41) I.Sara wrote: "Recent excavations in the Ukraine and Crimea points to the visible links of the Jats and the Scythians (42). N. Singh wrote: "The Scythians appear to originate from Central Asia. They reached Punjab between 50 B.C. and A.D. 50. It seems probable that the Scythian ancestors of the Jats entered the Sindh valley between 100 B.C. and A.D. 100."(43).

Arthur Edward Barstow wrote: "Meanwhile the Medii, Xanthii, Getae and other Scythian groups, were gradually working their way from the banks of the Oxus (River valley in Central Asia) into Southern Afghanistan and the pastoral highland about Quetta, whence they forced their way by the Bolan Pass, through the Sulaiman Mountains into Sindh, settling in Sindh about the beginning of the first century AD. It is from these Scythian immigrants that most of the Jat tribes are at any rate partly descended."(37)

There are, of course, some dissenting opinions on the racial ancestry of the Jats. For example, Professor J. Petti-grew wrote: "Another view holds that the Jats came from Asia Minor and Armenia in the successive invasions during the period 600 B.C. to A.D. 600." (44). There are also opinions which relate the Jats to the Aryans.

Although there are reports that the *Zutt* (as a genral argo-pastoralit population of Sindh) started to convert to the faith, most Jat clans of western Punjab have traditions that they accepted Islam at the hands of two famous Sufi saints of Punjab, Shaikh Faridudin Ganj Shaker of Pakpattan or his contemporary Baha Al Haq Zakiriya of Multan. In reality the process of conversion was said to be a much slower

process.(18). This process of incremental conversion is seen by different traditions among the community.

Rajputs: During the medieval period Rajputs were a dominant caste in the Punjab region. According to the 1911 census in British India, the total Rajput population in the Punjab was 1,635,578, of which 1,222,024 (74.5%) were Muslim. Today, Muslim Rajputs are found in Pakistan, especially in Punjab, Pothwar, and Sindh, There are a few Rajput clans in Baluchistan and Kashmir also. Hindu and Sikh Rajputs are mainly found in Indian Punjab. The situation of the Rajput clans in the south-west of Punjab, roughly the Seraiki speaking region, is interesting. These tribes are hardly distinguished from the Jat clans in their neighborhood, and for the most part belonged to the Bhatti of Jaisalmer and Bikaner, and their Panwar predecessors. These Rajput tribes lived on the banks of rivers and till recently were called the 'Janglee". Rajput clans appear to have been converted to Islam from Buddhism in late Medieval times, probably during the Mughal times.

The origin of the Rajputs is the subject of debate. Writers such as M. S. Naravane and V. P. Malik believe that the term was not used to designate a particular tribe or social group earlier than the 6th century AD, as there is no mention of the term in the historical record (46). One theory espouses that with the collapse of the Gupta empire from the late 6th century, the invading Hephthalites (the Huns) were probably integrated within Indian society. Leaders and nobles from among the invaders were assimilated into the *Kshatriya* rank in the Hindu *varna* system, while others who followed and supported them were ranked as cultivators. Aydogdy Kurbanov says that the assimilation was specifically between the Huns and the people from northwestern Pakistan, forming the Rajput community (47). At the same time, some indigenous tribes were ranked as Rajput, examples of which are the Bhatias, Bundelas, Chandelas, the Bhils and Rathors., through a special brahmanical ceremony.

Encyclopaedia Britannica notes that Rajputs "actually vary greatly in status, from princely lineages, such as the Guhilot and Kachwaha, to simple cultivators (48). According to most authorities, successful claims to Rajput status frequently were made by groups that achieved secular power; probably that is how the invaders from Central Asia as well as patrician lines of indigenous tribal peoples were absorbed (48). Pradeep Barua also believes that Rajputs have foreign origins, he says their practice of asserting Kshatriya status was followed by other Indian groups thereby establishing themselves as Rajputs (49).



Thus, some of the Rajput clans are descended from low caste Hindu tribes raised to importance for their economic status or evolving as a fighting group, while some clans descended mainly from outsiders, particularly the Huns and Kamboja tribes from the Pashtun Country. This diverse origin of the Rajputs show that they were descended from several distinct stocks. Thus, the word Rajput

has no reference to race, or a common descent or blood relationship. It is their war-like occupation, coupled with their aristocratic rank, that gave them a distinctive common feature and made the brahmins recognize them as *Kshatriyas*.

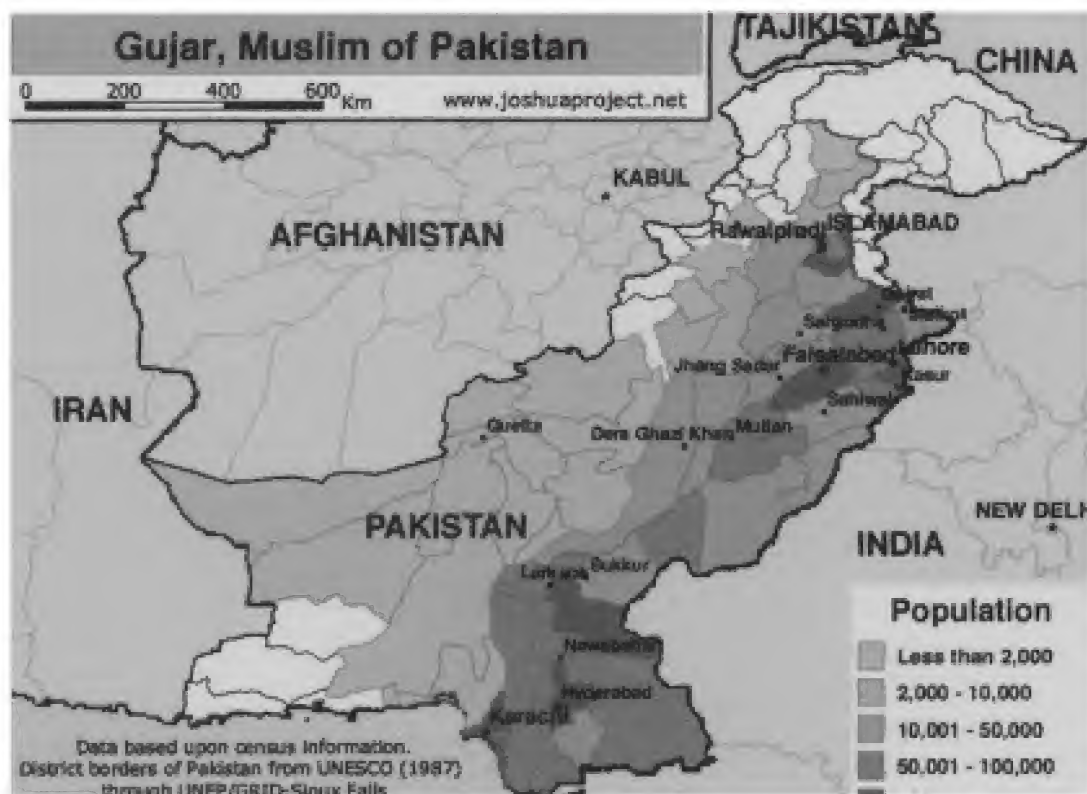
Some of the Rajput tribes are probably of Jat origin. In southwest Punjab the name Jat includes a most miscellaneous group of tribes of all sorts. Its significance tends to be occupational: to denote a body of cultivators or agriculturists. Even tribes which bear well-known Rajput names are often classified as Jats in the Punjab. Todd classifies Jats as one of the original Rajput tribes. "They belong to one and the same stock, they have been, for many centuries, so blended and so intermingled into one people that it is practically impossible to distinguish them as separate wholes" (45). Indeed, in many areas at present, distinction is social rather than ethnic. The same tribe is Rajput in one district and Jat in another according to the position in local tribes.

Gujjars: **Gujjars** make up a significant part of Pakistani population (upto 15 % according to some sources) and enjoy a good status generally. In pre-Partition Punjab, they were found mixed with other communities like Rajput and Arains but there did not seem to be an adulteration with the Jats. While the origin of the **Gujjars** is uncertain, they seem to have appeared in ancient Pakistan about the time of the Huns invasions of the region. In the 6th to 12th century, they were primarily classed as *Kshatriya* and *Brahmin*, and many of them later converted to Islam during the Muslim rule. The Hindu **Gujjars** today are assimilated into several *varnas* of Hinduism, some of them claim descent from *Suryavanshi* *Kshatriyas*.

It appears that the **Gujjars** of Pakistan were sun-worshippers who later got absorbed in the greater mass of Hinduism as they migrated to the East. Their copper-plate grants bear an emblem of the Sun. In the Hindu epic story of Ramayana, it is described that a war was fought among demons and gods. **Gujjars** fought against demons under the leadership of King Dasharatha. It is also stated

that after the war the **Gujjars** migrated from Mathura to Dwarka, Gujarat. There is also references of Gujar widows in *Yoga Vasistha*, whose husbands laid down their lives in the battlefield.

Historians and anthropologists differ on issue of Gujar origin. General Cunningham identifies the **Gujjars** with Kushans of Central Asia. He explains that 'Korso' and 'Kushan' written on the coins of Kushan king Kanishk is same as Gorsii and Kusane clans of **Gujjars**, respectively (50). He further adds that **Gujjars** came to India in the 3rd wave of migration of Kushans around the mid third century AD.



Some scholars, such as V. A. Smith, believed that the **Gujjars** were possibly a branch of Hephthalites ("White Huns"). The theory is that Hun tribes used to keep on moving but their base was in the country near Bahr-e-Khijar (Black Sea). From here they went to Europe and Central Asia. Their main occupation was grazing cattle and sheep.

They used to call themselves Khujar. Khujar got converted to Guaran then Guar or Gujar. Mr. D.B. Bhandarkar (51) also believes that Gujjars came into India with the Huns, and their name "Khujar" or "Khazar" was sanskritized to "Gujar". He also believes that several places in Central Asia are named after the Khujars and that the reminiscences of Khujar migration is preserved in these names.

General Cunningham, on the other hand, identified the Gujjars with Yuezhi or Tocharians. A. H. Bingley also considers the Gurjjars as descendants of Kushan/Yueh-chi or Tocharians of Indo-Scythian stock. Some others claim that the Gujar caste is related to the Chechens and the Georgians, and argue that Georgia was traditionally called Gorjestan). However, there is little evidence for such claims. The word "Georgia" derived from the Arabic and Persian word Gurj, and not Gujar or Gurjar.

According to Baij Nath Puri, Mount Abu region of present day Rajasthan had been the abode of the Gujjars during medieval period. These Gujjars migrated from Arbuda mountain region as early as sixth century A.D, and set up one or more principalities in Rajasthan and Gujarat. A larger part of Rajasthan and Gujarat had been long known as Gurjaratr (country ruled or protected by the Gujjars) or Gurjarabhumi (land of the Gurjars) for centuries prior to the Muslim period. The sociologist G. S. Ghurye believes that the name Gujar is derived from the principal profession followed by the tribe: cattle-breeding (the Sanskrit word for cow is gau and the old Hindi word for sheep is gadar). Since the Gujjars have been described in history and tradition as animal herders, this etymology seems to be credible. Keeping in view all this, it appears that the Gujjars of today are mainly a combination of local Indus peoples who have absorbed some Central Asian elements over time.

Many Gujjars are well represented in agriculture, the urban professions, civil service and officer class. They are now settled on large tracts of lands in northern India and Pakistan. They are known as very good farmers. The majority

of the **Gujjars** are found in Pakistan, while India has the second largest Gujar population. Now their population is about 33 million in Pakistan and 30 million in India.

The **Gujjars** are characterized by their strong and large build. The majority of **Gujjars** today are Muslim, although there is also a significant Hindu population of **Gujjars** who go with the title of Patel. **Gujjars** are sizeable in number in the state of Kashmir, and can also be found as minorities in Afghanistan and Iran .

Kamboh: Komboh, is a Sindhi tribe who are now the residents of Punjab, where they are estimated to be nearly 1.5 million strong. Before the Partition a sizable Komboh population inhabited East Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh in India where they used to be called Zuberis. Some Kombohs are still found in East Punjab and Haryana among the Hindus and the Sikhs. The Hindu Kambohs claim to be related to the Raiputs. They claim to have come to



The area of residence of Kambohs in Pakistan

Punjab in the period of Mahabhartar but there is no historical evidence for that. The British described them as "one of the finest class of agriculturists of India" (52,53); H.A. Rose in his *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-west Frontier* (54) writes about the Kambohs as follows:

"The Kamboh is one of the finest cultivating castes in the Punjab. They seldom engage in market-gardening, but they are no less industrious and skillful than the Arains. They are found in the upper Sutlej valley, throughout the northern portion of the eastern plains, to the Jamuna valley up to Karnal. They are especially numerous in Kapurthala. The Jamuna Kamboh seem to have come into the valley from the West, and there has lately been a very large influx of Kambohs from the northern tracts of Patiala into the great Dhak jungles between Thanesar and the river. The Sutlej Kamboh are divided into two branches, one which came up the river from the Multan country and the other down the valley from the neighborhood of Kapurthala, both movements having taken place under the Sikh rule. Under that rule they also came into Jallendher. They claim descent from Raja Karan, and say that their ancestors fled from Kashmir.

The Kambohs are said to be ancient inhabitants of Persia, and Karnal Kambohs trace their origins from Ghazni. Arains and Kambohs are commonly supposed to be so closely related: indeed in Montgomery a man appears to be called Arain if he is Musleman and Kamboh if Hindu. However, it is perhaps doubtful whether the supposed relationship has any further basis than the fact that they both came [to Uttar Pradesh] from the West, and are both of much the same social standing and agricultural repute. It is highly probable that the nucleus of the Arains caste was a group of Hindu Kambohs converted to Islam. Thus, in Jallundher, the Gaure, Hande and Momi clans are found in both castes, and in Montgomery several of their clan names are identical. It is said by some that the chief distinction is that the Kambohs take money for their daughters, while the Arains do not. But